

**Address delivered at a press conference by Martin Kyere,
Survivor and Spokesperson for Victims' Families and
Survivors of About 44 Ghanaians who were massacred in the
Gambia, Royal Lamerta Hotel Hotel, Kumasi, Ghana,
November 24, 2020**

Good Morning,

Fellow survivors and victims' families of the July 2005 Gambia
massacre,

Coalition Members of the Jammeh2Justice Ghana Coalition,

Distinguished Invited Guests,

Friends from the Media,

Ladies and Gentlemen

On behalf of my fellow survivors and victims' families, I would like to thank all of you for attending this press conference. These are not normal times as COVID-19 is still with us. However, as the COVID-19 pandemic continues to take lives, we must still forge a semblance of normality. In this case we must continue with the quest for justice and reparations for the more than 44 Ghanaians who were massacred in the Gambia in July 2005.

In July, this year, we commemorated the 15th anniversary of the unlawful killings of my fellow Ghanaians who were enroute to Europe from Senegal to the Gambia. We had hoped that there would have been no need to commemorate the unlawful killings as we were hopeful that those who bear the greatest responsibility for the unlawful killings and enforced disappearances of our fellow Ghanaians would have been brought to justice and compensation

paid to the survivors and victims' families. Unfortunately, as I speak today, the perpetrators are walking free and the survivors and victims' families are yet to get justice and compensation to enable us to have closure.

As some of you know, in July 2019, three soldiers who were part of the 'Junglers', a paramilitary force that took direct orders from Yahya Jammeh, former president of the Gambia, told the Gambia Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Commission (TRRC) that they participated in the unlawful killings of our fellow Ghanaians and other West African migrants on the orders of Yahya Jammeh.

Since then, and regrettably, our own Government under President Nana Addo Dankwa Akufo-Addo has not taken any meaningful steps to get justice and compensation for us, the citizens whose interest he swore an oath to protect and defend. Why?

Is it because we, the victims, are from poor homes; we have no formal education and are among the vulnerable in society? This

lack of action goes against a Memorandum of Understanding which the Government of Ghana and the Gambia signed in which both countries pledged to pursue the matter and bring the perpetrators to justice if new information emerged which pointed to the complicity of the perpetrators. As I stated earlier on, three soldiers have confessed that they participated in the killings on the orders of Yahya Jammeh.

Friends of the media, notwithstanding this lack of action by our own government, we have on our own been taking steps for justice with guidance and support from the Jammeh2Justice Ghana Coalition and our international partners, Human Rights Watch and TRIAL International, and our development partner, Open Society Foundation and in cooperation with our brothers and sisters in the Gambia who are also victims of Yahya Jammeh's egregious human rights violations.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in October 2019, and with guidance and support from the Jammeh2Justice Ghana Coalition we wrote

to the Gambia TRRC arguing that we qualify as victims under the Gambia Truth, Reconciliation and Reparations Act, 2017 and that we have standing to appear before the TRRC to have our case heard, to which the TRRC agreed.

We also asked the TRRC to provide us with the rules of procedure to guide our participation in the proceedings. In February this year, with the help of the Jammeh2Justice Ghana Coalition, we filed affidavits evidence and sent the affidavits to the Gambia TRRC.

Last month, the Gambia TRRC announced it would hear the migrants' case, of which the unlawful killings of more than 44 Ghanaians is a key part, when it resumes its sittings, which sittings are ongoing.

Following this announcement by the Gambia TRRC, we again wrote to the TRRC this month, reiterating our earlier request in October 2019 for guidance about the TRRC's rules of procedure;

when it would give us our day before the TRRC for our case to be heard as well as provide us with information about how many of us, victims' families and survivors the TRRC intends to invite to appear before the TRRC to enable us to prepare adequately.

Ladies and Gentlemen, as I speak, the TRRC has not officially responded to our request. We urge the Gambia TRRC to, as a matter of urgency provide us with the requested information. We urge the Gambia TRRC to prioritize our case and let us have our day before the TRRC. We urge the TRRC to give our case, which constitutes the single highest number of unlawful killings and enforced disappearances in the Gambia, the attention it deserves. All lives matter and we do not want to believe that our case is not being given the needed attention because we are not Gambians.

Ladies and Gentlemen, in addition to some of us who will be called as fact witnesses, our expectation is that the Gambia TRRC will subpoena current and former high ranking Gambian officials including those who arrested the migrants at Barra beach, who

relayed Jammeh's instructions to his security chiefs, who transported us to the Naval headquarters, who killed a first set of 8 migrants in Brufut, who held the second group in detention in Banjul, and who took that group to the Gambia-Senegal border and killed all of us, with the exception of me, Martin Kyere who escaped. Some of these Gambian officials will include current Minister of the Interior, Yankuba Sonko and current Gambian Police Commissioner in charge of Crime Management Ensa "Jesus" Badjie who destroyed the diary log of the Barra police station which recorded the Migrants' arrest and made a new log and backdated it, according to a 2018 report by Human Rights Watch and TRIAL International. These officials also carried out a cover-up of the unlawful killings of the Ghanaians and other West African migrants before international investigators from the UN and ECOWAS arrived in the Gambia to investigate the unlawful killings.

In addition to calling Gambian officials, we expect the TRRC to subpoena some officials at the United Nations and ECOWAS.

These officials include:

(1) **UN** - Ambassador Curtis Ward, he led the UN/ECOWAS fact-finding team to investigate the killings in 2008.

(2) **ECOWAS** - Dr. Mohammed Ibn Chambas, he was the Executive Secretary of ECOWAS when the massacre occurred in 2005, becoming the President of ECOWAS until 2009, and worked closely with the UN/ECOWAS fact-finding team which produced the fact-finding report, which we all have found from the testimonies of the three soldiers was a white-wash.

Finally, we also expect the TRRC to request for a copy of the UN and ECOWAS fact-finding report about the July 2005 massacre which has never been made public.

Friends of the media, every state has the responsibility to ensure it leads the quest for justice and compensation for its citizens when

the right to life of its citizens has been unlawfully violated; when its citizens have been forced to disappear in the manner it happened to our fellow Ghanaians in the Gambia in July 2005.

Ladies and Gentlemen, we are deeply saddened that various administrations of the New Patriotic Party (NPP) and National Democratic Congress (NDC) have not done much to ensure justice and compensation for us over the years despite several high-ranking officials of the NPP and NDC administrations having deep knowledge of the facts and circumstances of this matter. For example, our current president, Nana Akufo-Addo was the Foreign Minister when the unlawful killings occurred in July 2005 and actually led a high-powered Government delegation to the Gambia barely two weeks after the first of eight bodies were found in the Brufut Forest.

Former president John Dramani Mahama was the vice-president of the Republic of Ghana when the NDC administration signed a Memorandum of Understanding with the Gambia in 2009,

accepting a \$500,000 donation from the Gambia, which was to be given to the families to help with the burial expenses of the victims, out of which more than half of the amount was misappropriated. To date, former president Mahama, who is also the flagbearer of the NDC for the December 7, 2020 election has not said a word about the need to ensure justice and compensation for the victims' families and survivors following the confessions by the three Gambian soldiers in July 2019 that they participated in the killings of the Ghanaians on the orders of Yahya Jammeh.

Similarly, President Akufo-Addo who is also the flagbearer of the NPP for the December 7 election and current President of the Republic of Ghana has not taken any meaningful steps to ensure justice and compensation for us. What is even more disappointing is that in December 2019 President Akufo-Addo told the media that even though he believed Gambian officials were complicit in the unlawful killings of Ghanaians when he led the Ghanaian delegation to Gambia two weeks after the killings, he cannot do

anything about the matter even though the Junglers had confessed to murdering Ghanaians on the orders of Yahya Jammeh. I have left the matter to the Gambian authorities to take action on the matter, he told the media.

Fellow Ghanaians, in conclusion, we reiterate our call on the Gambia TRRC to give us our day before the TRRC and finally to get to the truth in this case.

We call on all the presidential candidates in the upcoming December 7, 2020 presidential election to commit to ensuring justice and compensation for the victims' families and survivors of the July 22nd massacre and enforced disappearances of our fellow Ghanaians in the Gambia. If we do not see justice soon from Gambia and Ghana we will be forced to take the case to the ECOWAS Community Court of Justice.

Thank you.